

CONFIRMATION TESTIMONY OF NELSON B. BEFTEL

Good afternoon Chair Kanno, Vice-Chair Ihara, Senator Kawamoto, Senator Taniguchi, Senator Sakamoto and Senator Slom. Thank you for allowing me to testify. I would like to first introduce my deputy director, Colleen LaClair, who will be joining us in March.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to submit written testimony and those who came to testify on my behalf this afternoon. I am so overwhelmed by the amount of support that I have received. . . . It is especially gratifying to receive testimony from people who represent so many facets of my life and our beautiful State. They are my high school and college classmates, my teachers and mentors, former colleagues and co-workers, fellow members of the Hawaii State Bar, former clients, union members and leaders, medical doctors, small business owners, executives, the Department's administrators, two former well-respected DLIR Directors, and the many working hands that have build and maintained our State.

I am truly humbled to know that so many good people support my nomination. Their confidence in my character, skills and abilities to lead the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations is deeply gratifying. I shall continue to do my very best to be deserving of your trust.

One of the Department's responsibilities is to increase the economic security and well-being of the workers. In order to improve our working family's economic security, we must strengthen and diversify our economy. We need to be more business friendly, while ensuring the rights of the working people are protected. I am looking forward to the challenge of leading the Department in striking this new balance.

I have lot of appreciation and respect for what the labor unions have accomplished for Hawaii's working families. I realize that I would not be here before you today if it were not for the labor unions. Both of my parents and many of my family members were and are long time union members. I have shared the sweat and tears of the working families.

At the same time, in my private practice of law, I have represented businesses - large and small - and witnessed first-hand the struggles and obstacles they have encountered in doing business in Hawaii. In order for our State to prosper and be competitive in the twenty-first century, we need to seriously consider the voices and concerns of the business community. Our Department must strive to serve both the working people and the business community.

Recent economic realities have made it clear that we can no longer abide by the business vs. labor approach. Our decisions on policies and legislation must always be geared toward mutual success for labor and business as their fate is dependent on each other's success.

I quote a plea from former Governor Ariyoshi, who I deeply respect and admire because of his fiscal responsibility and his quiet and effective leadership. He states: "[W]e have a golden opportunity to mature politically. The public must participate like family members who define what matters most and accept that

we can't have everything. It's part of leaving the old plantation era behind and creating a new, competitive pan-Pacific society. It's called growing up."

I join his plea and look forward to working and growing together with the unions, the business community, the Legislature and the people of this great State in working towards a better Hawaii.

Thank you.